

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 14, 2015

Secretary Arne Duncan
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20202-1100

Dear Secretary Duncan:

Each of us counts among our constituents students who have suffered from pervasive discrimination and bullying because their teachers, administrators, or peers knew or perceived them to be lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). In some cases, these children and their families have desperately sought out their elected representatives for assistance. Too many have reported that the teachers and administrators charged with safeguarding students' wellbeing have stood idly by and allowed this discrimination to continue unchecked, even when asked to intervene. While fully addressing this problem will require legislation from Congress, we ask that the Department of Education use every avenue at its disposal to protect LGBT students from discriminatory school environments.

Students who identify as LGBT are much more likely to be bullied at school than their peers. In the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network's (GLSEN's) most recent school climate survey, nearly three quarters of LGBT students reported being verbally harassed because of their sexual orientation, 55 percent reported being verbally harassed because of their gender expression, 49 percent said they had been bullied over the Internet, and more than a third had been physically harassed or assaulted. The impact of this discrimination is not just limited to the school day; students who experience bullying and harassment are more likely to suffer from depression, low self-esteem, and other mental health problems. Further, they are less likely to attain a high GPA or move onto post-secondary education, which can disadvantage them throughout their lives.

We recognize the unprecedented efforts the Department has made under your leadership to address the many challenges that LGBT students face in our nation's schools. Last year, the Office of Civil Rights clarified that Title IX protections against sex-based discrimination extend to discrimination based on gender identity or gender nonconformity. This is a promising step toward shielding LGBT students from discrimination in the 36 states that have not enacted laws prohibiting discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identity in schools. We also appreciate the Department's initiatives to improve data collection on LGBT bullying and

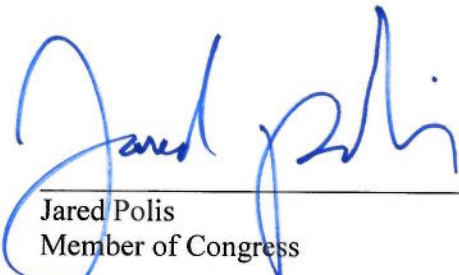
harassment and to affirm the rights of students to form gay-straight alliances and other groups focusing on the needs of LGBT students.

We urge you to build on these initial steps by developing, finalizing, and issuing guidance that clearly outlines schools' obligations to protect LGBT students from discrimination under Title IX. Comprehensive guidance on this matter would not only provide information on what steps schools must take to cover issues such as access to curricular and extracurricular activities, protecting student privacy, and the application of dress standards; it would also help schools understand their obligation to prevent bullying and harassment against LGBT students under current law. The Department must continue to conduct outreach to help schools develop strategies to ensure these students' educational needs are being met. It must also enforce guidelines requiring schools to fulfill their responsibility to ensure that they do not face a discriminatory school environment.

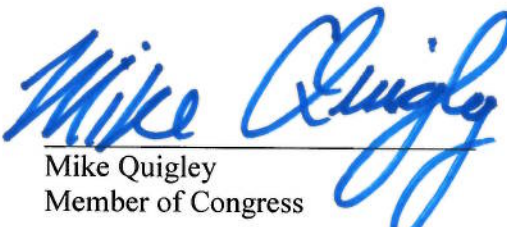
Many students, families, and educators are eagerly awaiting the publication of guidelines that clarify schools' obligations to LGBT students under Title IX. Please provide a timeline for the Department's guidance on this matter.

Thank you again for your efforts to date on this important issue, and we look forward to working with you toward the ultimate goal of providing a safe school environment that allows all learners the opportunity to succeed free from bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

Sincerely,



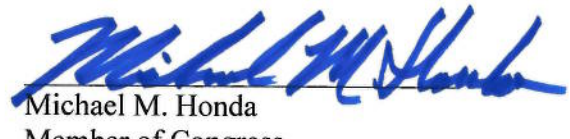
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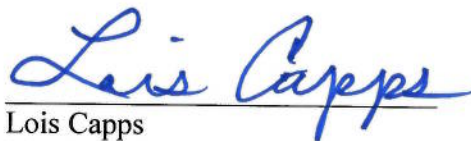
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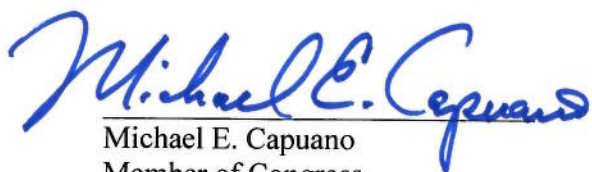
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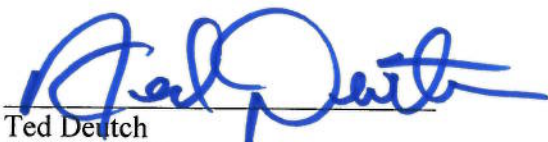
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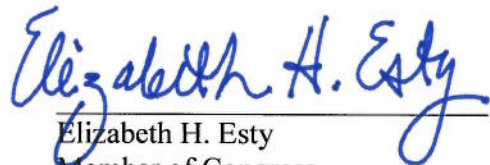
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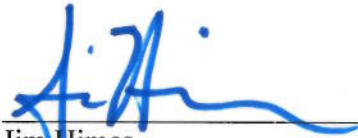
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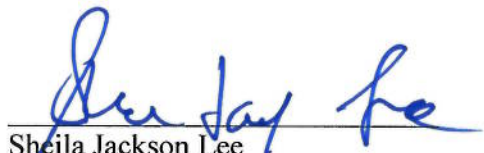
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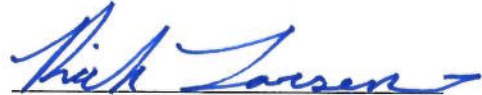
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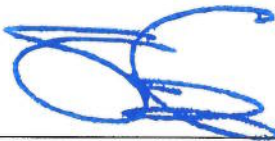
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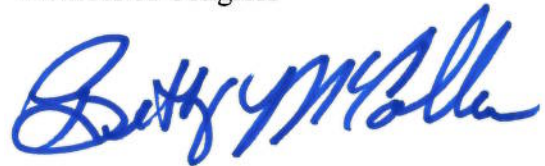
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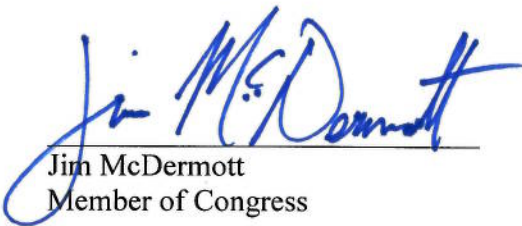
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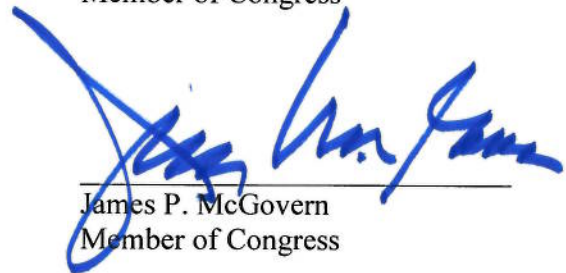
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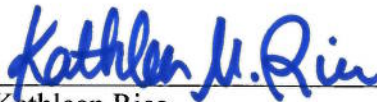
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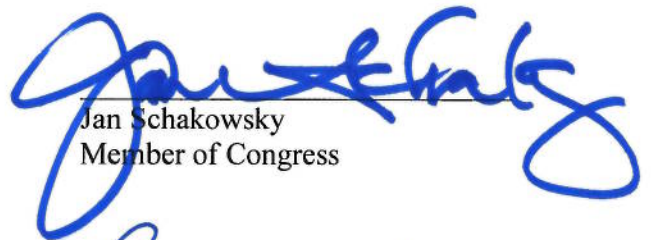
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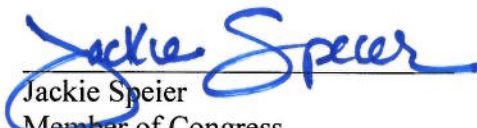
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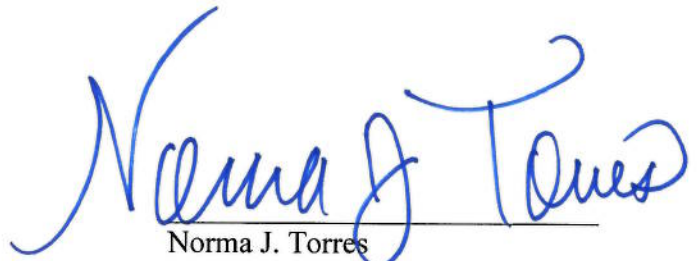
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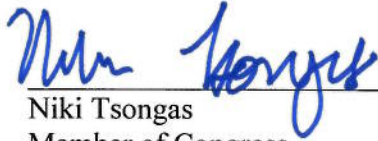
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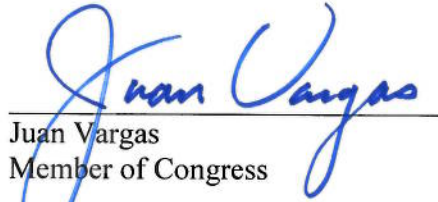
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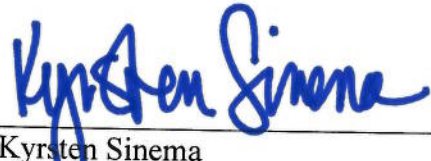
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